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POETRY.

THE PRISONER FOR DEBT.

BY JOHN C. WHITTIER.

Look on him through his dungeon grate,
Feebly and cold the morning light
Comes stealing round him dim and late,
As if it loathed the sight.
Reclining on his low straw bed,
His hands uphold his drooping head—
His bloodless cheek is seam'd and hard,
Unshorn his grey, neglected beard;
And o'er his bony fingers flow
His long dishevelled locks of snow.

No grateful fire before him glows—
And yet the winter breath is chill;
And o'er his half clad person goes
The frequent ague thrill.
Silent—save ever and anon,
A sound, half murmur and half groan,
Forces apart the painful grip
Of the old sufferer's bearded lip;
O! sad and crushing is the fate
Of old age chained and desolate!

Just God! why lies that old man there?
A murderer shares his prison bed,
Whose eyeballs, through his horrid hair,
Gleam on him fierce and red;
And the rude oath and heartless jeer
Fall ever on his loathing ear.
And, in wakefulness or sleep,
Nerve, flesh, and fibre, thrill and creep,
Whene'er that ruffian's tossing limb,
Crimson'd with murder, touches him!

What has the grey hair'd prisoner done?
Has murder stain'd his hands with gore?
Not so; his crime's a fouler one;
God made the old man poor!
For this he shares a felon's cell—
The fittest earthly type of hell!
For this—the boon for which he pour'd
His young blood on the invader's sword;
And counted light the fearful cost—
His blood gained liberty is lost.

And thou, for such a place of rest,
Old prisoner, pour'd thy blood as rain
On Concord's field, and Bunker's crest,
And Saratoga's plain!
Look forth, thou man of many scars,
Through the dim dungeon's iron bars;
It must be joy, in sooth, to see
Yon monument* upreared to thee;
Piled granite and a prison cell;
The land repays thy service well!

Go, ring the bells and fire the guns,
And fling the starry banner out;
Shout "Freedom!" till your lisping ones
Give back their cradled shout.
Let boasted eloquence declaim
Of honor, liberty, and fame;
Still let the poet's strain be heard,
With "glory" for each second word;
And every thing with breath agree
To praise "our glorious liberty."
And when the patriot cannon jars
That prison's cold and gloomy wall,
And through its gates the stripes and stars
Rise on the winds and fall—
Think ye that prisoner's aged ear
Rejoices in the general cheer?
Think ye his dimand failing eye
Is kindled at your pageantry?
Sorrowing of soul, and chain'd of limb,
What is your carnival to him?

Down with the law that binds him thus!
Unworthy freemen, let it find
No refuge from the withering curse
Of God and human kind!
Open the prisoner's living tomb,
And usher from its brooding gloom
The victims of your savage code,
To the free sun and air of God!
No longer dare as crime to brand
The chastening of the Almighty's hand!

*Bunker Hill Monument.

Important Discovery.—A discovery has been made of a way of hardening wood, so as to give it almost the compactness of iron. This, it is said is done by exhausting the air from the wood by an air pump, and then saturating it with iron and lime in solution.—Wood submitted to this process, has been used for some time on railroads in England and found so firm as to have been scarcely marked by the wheels of the cars.

The earth is our work-house, but heaven is our store-house. Our chief business *here* should be to lay up treasure *there*.

DR. PHELPS' REMARKS.

A Bill for the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal being under consideration, on a motion having been submitted by Dr. PHELPS, to limit the sale of the bonds to par, Mr. REEDER, of Charles County, having addressed the House in opposition to the motion, Dr. PHELPS rose in reply, and said:

MR. SPEAKER: I wish you, sir, and this House distinctly to understand, that under no circumstances will I be compelled to enter upon the discussion of the main features of this bill, at this time, and I deem it only necessary to remark that there are features and provisions embodied in the proposition, which, at the *proper time*, will be freely and fully discussed—propositions and principles to which I can never give my assent, and against which I now enter my most solemn protestations.

We rise at this moment, therefore, to call the attention of the House to some of the positions assumed, and which have just been urged with so much pertinacity upon your consideration, by the Honorable gentleman from Charles, (Mr. Reeder,) and in the onset, Mr. Speaker, beg leave to enter our entire protest to that distinguished consideration, which gentlemen seem inclined to bestow upon us, as the opponents of this bill. Why is it that we are to occupy the foreground in this debate, and to be held accountable for the fate of this bill, it is impossible to imagine. Why, sir, we are but an humble member of this most honorable body, but an integral part of the entire legislature, accountable alone for our words and actions upon this floor, when it is evident the fate of this bill, as well as others now before us, depend upon the joint action of the majority of both branches of this General Assembly.

But to proceed; the gentleman from Charles in the discussion upon this subject, commences with a most violent tirade against the right of instructions, and as is usual with him, endeavors to entrench himself behind the bill of rights, the constitution of the State, and *laws of Moses;* and in his onset more than intimates that to obey the express will of the people, has a direct tendency to induce the representatives to commit perjury, and to violate that constitution which he has solemnly sworn to support. He declares the will of the people should have no more effect upon the representative, than the *passing breeze or howling tempest.* This, Mr. Speaker, is a new doctrine in these halls, a new species of republicanism, a sort of democracy, however well suited to the genius of the people of Charles, I venture to say would not be so palatable to a majority of the good citizens of this State. Why, sir, what are we upon this floor but the representatives of the people at large, entrused by them with their dearest rights, and dearest privileges; bound faithfully to defend and protect their rights and their liberties, and to carry out such measures as we in our consciences believe would conduce most to the indivinual as well as general prosperity.

But the gentlemen has told us that upon the completion of this Chesapeake and Ohio Canal is to depend the faith and honor of Maryland. A most startling proposition, indeed, and one, if true, well calculated to make us pause and deeply to reflect upon our onward career. And, sir, it has been more than intimated, that all who oppose this bill are adverse to the payment of the debt of the State. Why, sir, we have been taught to believe, that the faith and honor of Maryland had a stronger substratum to rest upon than either railroads or canals—that the integrity of Maryland rested upon the immutable principles of truth and justice.—Upon the innate sense of her citizens of right and wrong, and their arhorence of every thing which would have the effect to stamp with lasting infamy either her present citizens, or those who are to follow after us;—that the debt of Maryland was based upon the entire wealth of the State, and upon a just regard for the honor and glory of the commonwealth, and as to the insinuation that our attachment to the faith of the State is to be questioned, because of our opposition to this bill, it passes by us as the idle wind, which is sometimes so gentle as to be neither *seen or felt.* Our course upon this floor, as well as elsewhere, protects us fully and entirely from all such imputations; for, sir, we need not tell you and learned gentlemen here, that whilst others may have hesitated upon this great and absorbing subject, that we have stood shoulder to shoulder by those who have been foremost in the ranks in the darkest hour of gloom and despondency, which has sometimes overshadowed our State, in endeavoring to bear her up amidst her falling fortune, and to redeem her from that degradation to which some would willingly consign her.

But the honorable gentleman goes farther, and says, that the payment of the debts of the State depends upon the completion of the canal—that if the debt is not paid we shall be plunged in both a foreign and domestic war; therefore the peace of both Europe and America, is made to depend upon the adoption or rejection of this amendment. Sir, such a doctrine and such a position need but be named to ensure its condemnation by every intelligent member of this House, and of the entire community. Sir, the idea is *sublimely rediculous,* and could only have originated in a most distempered imagination, and seems more like the ebullitions of a midnight dream than the declaration of a sensible and discreet man, addressing a grave legislative body. The gentleman, in his zeal for the passage of this bill, has suffered his imagination to outstrip his usual exercise of discretion and sound judgment, both of which he is acknowledged to possess in no ordinary degree. Yea, the honorable gentleman goes further still, and the inference is clear from his remarks that the experiment of a free government is made to depend upon the decision of this House, upon this very amendment now pending before us. Now, Mr. Speaker, we frankly acknowledge that when we submitted this amendment we had not the most distant idea that consequences so momentous, so important, were involved in this proposition—that the fate of nations and of empires were suspended upon the decision of this question—that this government with all its glory and its greatness was endangered by this proposition—that the bayonets of one portion of her citizens would probably seek the blood of another portion—that civil war and bloodshed and internal commotions might prevail throughout the broad expanse of this entire land. No sir, had we have seen consequences so dreadful to the imagination, so appalling to the human understanding, as is wrapped up in this proposition we would have been the last, here or elsewhere, to have agitated this most sanguinary subject.

The gentleman has said, in his usual courteous manner, that we generally support our position by round and naked assertions, and we hope to be permitted to say in reply, that the honorable gentleman from Charles in the discussion of this subject has talked of every thing in heaven and earth, in the skies and beneath them, except the subject matter under consideration.—He has even traveled back to the days of good old Moses, and endeavored to prove to this House that this *good old prophet* was a great internal improvement man—that he was in favor of railroads and canals, and whether he has established this fact by proof other than by round and naked assertion, we leave to you, sir, and to honorable gentlemen upon this floor to determine.

But, sir, what is the question before the House?—What is the proposition now awaiting our decision?—What is the amendment in which is involved all these overwhelming consequences, and on account of which the gentleman from Charles has dwelt so long, and presented for our consideration this horrid picture?—Would you believe it, Mr. Speaker, when we announce to you, and to learned gentlemen here, this grave question out of which has grown this debate, is the simple proposal to annex to the first section of the bill the proviso prohibiting the sale of the bonds of the Canal company for a less sum than their par value. Yes, sir, this is the amendment which, if adopted, is to dishonor the State—is to stamp upon our fair fame the black and lasting sin of repudiation—is to produce a foul stain upon the bright escutcheon of our country's glory, and plunge us into all the horrors of a never ending civil war—will sap the very foundation of this fair fabric of American liberty and independence.

But, sir, let us come down from this lofty height to which we have been elevated by the bright and distempered imagination of the gentleman from Charles. Let sober reason and sound sense again resume her empire. Let us approach this subject as become sound and practical men, and examine it in a manner suited to the representatives of a sober thinking community. What are the provisions of the bill upon your table, and what is the evil intended to be guarded against? The first provision of the bill is to authorise the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal company, to issue bonds upon the preferred liens of this work, for two millions of dollars to carry the work to Cumberland, and by subsequent sections of the bill, two other millions of dollars is proposed to be raised to extend the work to the mouth of Savage river, and to pay the debts of the company, making altogether four millions of dollars. Our proposition is to limit the sale of these bonds to par;—to guard against the company directly and the State indirectly being shaved by stock jobbers and speculators. Now, sir, this is the amendment and this the contingency to be averted, which should claim our most serious and calm deliberation. Is this restriction necessary, and does the interest of Maryland require this safeguard to be engrafted upon the bill now before the House? If this legislature is to profit at all by the light of experience, the proposition would seem to be self evident. What has contributed most to entail upon this State her present unparalled embarrassments? That utter prostration of public credit and public prosperity which is so lamentably spread abroad throughout your State? It is this self same operation which is now again about to be fastened upon us, of being shaved, and the people cheated out of their honest and just rights.

Mr. Speaker, we need not remind you that Maryland has sacrificed more by this destructive and ruinous practice than would have been sufficient long since to have completed this great work, and to have penetrated the golden fields of which we have heard so much, and from which is to flow nothing but exhaustless wealth. For ourselves, we stand here prepared to peril life and limb to guard the State against a continuation of this most destructive legislation.

But gentlemen say if this amendment prevail, it will defeat the Bill itself—that the whole Bill must fall to the ground—that it will be a dead letter upon your statute book. Well Mr. Speaker, we say then, in the name of high Heaven, be it so. If this bill cannot be made operative without a sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of dollars, let it fall to the ground, and the sooner the better. Sir, we have heard much of the exhaustless resources of the Allegany coal & iron mines—of the immense wealth which is to flow forever into the lap of Maryland upon the completion of this work, & yet notwithstanding there has already been expended upon this work, about thirteen millions of dollars by this State and others, all of which is proposed by this bill, to be offered in security for this two millions to complete to Cumberland, still the friends of this bill tell us on every side, that capitalists will not *risk* their money upon such security unless we submit to be again shaved in the market.

Now Sir, if there be a doubt upon the minds of the friends of this bill, or upon the minds of capitalists who know all about this work, of the profits of the work when complete, being sufficient to secure beyond doubt two millions of Dollars, what is to become of the present investment of the State? What is to become of the seven or eight millions of dollars of the people's money, and for which we are now taxed to the very teeth to accure the interest? According to official estimates, now in the possession of this House, it is estimated this work can be completed to Cumberland for a little over thirteen hundred thousand dollars in *cash*, and the correctness of which estimates, no one upon this floor has as yet pretended to question. Then, Sir, according to the acqnowledgements of gentlemen here, friends to this bill, we are to be shaved out of some *seven hundred thousand dollars*, if this amendment be rejected.—This, Mr. Speaker, is in the estimation of some men, matter of moonshine—a sum not worthy of serious consideration. Sir, we rejoice to say we are not one of that number.

The more gentlemen oppose this amendment, the more thoroughly, the more deeply do we become convinced of its necessity. For if this bill is to pass, (and God forbid it should,) for one we are anxious to throw around it such safeguards as will, to some extent, protect the people of Maryland from further loss—from being again called upon for further aid in the prosecution of this most unfortunate enterprise. For the excercise of this caution, we have been denounced—have been held up to the opprobrium of this House, and to the people of Maryland at large—have been denounced as being inimical to the best interest of the State. Well, Sir, be it so, we have at least the approbation of an approving conscience, an inward assurance that we have but discharged what we honestly believe to be a high and imposing duty we owe our God and our country. We are willing to abide the issue before that people whom we have often served, and to whom we are now immediately responsible for our course upon this floor.

We will now, Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, notice briefly the pathetic appeal which the gentleman from Charles has made to the feelings of the members of the Eastern Shore, to vote against this amendment. We have been called upon to come to the rescue; have been told, if any one or more of us would lay aside our sectional feelings & vote against this amendment, that we should be immortalized—that the trump of fame would herald our names abroad—that posterity would do us honor. Sir, so far as we ourselves are concerned, we are not emulous of such immortality. With our notions of duty, we should deserve the immortality which attaches to the name of the Ephesian boy who burned the temple—*an immortal infamy.*

It has been, Sir, through appeals like this that the debt of Maryland has been fastened upon us, and that too by Eastern Shore votes. It has been through such a medium that that once flourshing and happy country has become desolate and her innocent citizens bourne down by a weight of taxation and debt from which we nor our children can scarce hope ever to esape.

A country distinguished alike for its beauty and location, and the intelligence and hospitality of her citizens, and should we now prove recent to her interest and disregard the well ascertained will of her people, we should deserve nothing at her hands but one loud lasting peal of scorn and honest indignation. With these unpremeditated remarks, Mr. Speaker, we will now take our seat, with the understanding, when the proper time shall arrive, we propose to give at length our views upon the main features of the bill.

Definition of a Kiss.—The following definition of a kiss, is taken from a german love letter, written in 1769. Ladies, dear ladies, is it correct?

'What is a kiss? A kiss, as it were is a seal of exprssing our sincere attachments; the pledge of our future union, a dumb, but at the same time audible language of a living heart; a present which at the same time that is given is taken from us, the impression of an ardent attachment on an ivory coral press; the striking of two flints agains one another; a crimson balsam for a love wounded heart—a sweet bite of the lip—an affectionate pinching of the mouth—a delicious dish of which is eaten with scarlet spoons—a sweet meat which does not satisfy our hunger—a fruit which is planted and gatherd at the same time - and the quickest exchange of questions and answers of two lovers; the fourth degree of love.

A Revolutionary Soldier. We had the pleasure yesterday afternoon, of shaking hands with Stephen Baird, now in the 100th year of his age, and who served nearly 8 years in the Revolutionary war as one of Gen Washington's life guards.—Baird looks remarkably well for one of his years—walks well with the support of a stick, but it is evident that his fighting days are over. He came to the office of Alderman Potts and made oath that one Bowman a store keeper living in Chester county, near the place of Baird's residence, has got the old man's pension fund for several years, and compelled the old soldier to take goods out of his store instead of giving him his money. The old man got tired of this impostion. (and it would be strange indeed if one who fought through the whole of the Revolutionary War could submit to it,) and came to Alderman Potts, under the advice of a friend to make complaint. The object of Baird is to get the money himself direct from Washington.—*Phil. Sun.*

A Serious Joke. The Pittsburg Chronicle has heard of a wedding, which some days since took place at Lawrenceville, near that city, which was intended as a joke, but which has been declared binding, as the parties were lawfully "joined together," by an Alderman, who, also, in addition to his other duties, preaches occasionally.

The parties are respectable and wealthy, and are every way worthy of each other. It was the result of a banter on the part of the lady, which was promply complied with on the part of the young man, by his offering to go immediately and have the ceremony performed.—They went to the Alderman, communicated to him their business, and in "less than no time" he went through the marriage ceremony; and declared them "man and wife" But when the functionary requested them to kneel down with him for prayer, the parties hesitated, and enquired of him whether he had really lawfully married them. To this he replied in the affirmative, and they left his office much alarmed at what had been done, and which they intended for a joke. Whether they have agreed to live together, as they should, we have not lerned. It has been the occasion, however, of some considerable "town talk" for the last few days.

Leap Year.—The editor of the Temperance Herald, (published at Camden, South Carolina,) on the first day of its appearance, announced to his fair readers that the present being leap year, conferred upon them certain privileges amongst which was that of paying *their* addresses to toe gentlemen, any one of whom, should he be so ungracious and ungallant as not to receive them favourably, forfeited his horse and watch. The paper had been issued but a few hours when Miss Lydia Green entered the office made proposals to the astonished editor, and demanded his hand or the forfeit. He freely relinquished his gray horse and patent lever rather than relinquish the right of making a selection for himself, whilst the lady appeared to be equally pleased with her bargain.—*Balt. Sun.*

A Quizzer Quizzed.—On a recent occasion of a medical professor delivering practical lectures, to the public, a gawky lumbering clodhopper thought he had devised a mode of turning the laugh against the doctor. He mounted the stage, and on being questioned as to his disorder, said, very gravely—

'Why, I am a liar.'

'Sad disorder, sir, but perfectly curable,' said the doctor.

'Well,' said the man, 'but I've a worse nor that, I've lost my memory.'

'Quite curable, also,' added the doctor.—'But I must make my preparations. Come again after dinner, and I will be ready for you; but pay down five shillings.'

The man, who had intended to have his fun gratis, resisted, but the doctor declared he never let any one down from the stage till he had paid something.

'Besides,' said the doctor, 'how can I trust you?—You say you are a liar, and have no memory; so you will either break your promise or forget all about it.'

A loud laugh from the crowd expressed their acquiescence in the justice of the claim, and the poor fool, *nolens volens*, was compelled to lay down the cash. No one supposed he would come again, but he still hoped that he might turn the tables, and presented himself at the appointed hour. The doctor received him with great gravity and, addressing the audience, said—

'Gentleman may think it a joke, but I assure them on the honor of a gentleman, that it is a very serious affair; and I hereby engage to return the money, if the bystanders do not acknowledge the cure, and that I am fairly entitled to the reward.'

The man sat down—was furnished with a glass of water—the doctor produced a box of flattened black pills: and to show that they were perfectly innocent, affected to swallow three or four himself. He then gave one to the man, who, after many wry faces, bit it in two—started up, spitting and sputtering, and exclaimed—

'Why, hang me, if isn't cobbler's wax!'

'There,' said the doctor, lifting up both hands, 'did any body ever witness so sudden, so miraculous a recovery? He is evidently cured of lying for he has told the truth instantly; and as to memory, my good fellow,' continued he, patting him on the back, 'if you ever forget this, call on me and I'll return you the money.'

The Last of the Steuarts.—This most wonderful character still lives at Tweedmouth. He will complete his 115th year on Christmas, 1843. His father, General Jonn Stewart, was a cousin of 'Prince Charlie,' the Pretender. His grandmother was the Lady of Airlie, well known in old Scotch song—James Stuart saw those memorable battles during the rebellion in 1745, Prestonpans and Guilloden, and has spoken to and had wine with the pretender. He served on the side of the royalists in the American war, and was at the battle of Quebeck, where General Wolfe lost his life at the moment of victory. He served on board a man-of-war for many years under those naval heroes, Admiral Hood. He has been five times married, and now lives with his fifth wife, 75 years younger than himself. He has had by his several wives 24 childred, ten of them have been killed in battle—five of them at India, two at Trafalgar under Nelson, one at Waterloo, and two at Algiers.—For nearly 60 years he has travelled in the Border districts as a wandering minstrel, playing on a fiddle, but he never asked alms from any one. Hundreds of persons can bear testimony to his amazing strength, from which circumstance he got the bye-name of 'Jemmy Strength.' Among other feats he could carry a 24 pounder cannon, and he has been known to lift a cart load of hay weighing a ton and a half, upon his back. Many a time has he taken up a jackass, and walked through the toll-bar, carrying it on his shoulders. It will be long before we can look upon his like again, to hear his stories of 1745, and his glowing description of the young Chevalier.—*Perthshire Advertiser.*

Major Noah, in the last number of the N. Y. Messenger gives the following desceiption of Broadway as seen in different lights.

Broadway by gaslight.—A panorama of wickedness undisguised.

Broadway by Daylight.—Paint, padding, powder and presumption. A picture of sin seen through a veil of morality.

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